

Mangma the Genealogist

211

fight through until down. So he didn't. My comb fell out and I couldn't find it. I was angry because my comb had disappeared. I said if I didn't find my comb I would fight right through until down. Then Fanning came and said, "Here is your comb. I was saving it for you." (The implication is that he had tried to steal it.) Then Mangma told the young man to go on dancing, to be quiet, and not to fight any more.

December 7, 1938

I want to talk of the time I lived in Awai. There were two women and a man. The one woman gave birth to a witch and the other to a normal person. (Informant had just been telling a witch story to another person. I stopped this narrative and asked him to talk about himself.)

When I went to Awai I had a friend, Lamsai, there. Thirty of us went to the vicinity to hunt deer and pigs; we stayed there twelve days. We shot a six-prong deer. All in all there were a hundred and eighty deer killed that time. (Highly improbable.) Every night we counted meat and us. (He goes on about the magnitude of the hunt, about having to go all the way down to the Limbur River for water, and having to go back to the village for supplies on the fifth day.)

[I asked if he had family in Awai.] Yes, I have Female House kin there. (Question.) I was old enough to use a bow when I went there, about twenty. (Why did he go?) I met Lamsai at the trading place in Laklai. I had had had back with rice here. When Lamsai asked me to trade with him, I went. Lamsai said, "Next time bring me just pandanus leaves, and my mother will make the raincoats for me." The next time day I took him pandanus leaves. He said not to go back just yet but to go to Awai with him and pick kassari nuts. There Lamsai said, "I grew fifteen cans of rice here. Now you plant this field too. You can't go back. In good years we have lots of rice. Even rat years we get a little. Use the garden for rice." I went there in December. Corn was already growing, but we planted rice even though it was late. (Was he already married?) No. (Lamsai married?) Yes. (Still friends with Lamsai?) I still go there. I have three coconut and five areca trees there. There were six but one fell. I have already returned six times to Awai for coconuts. When I was living there a coconut fell from a tree. I wanted to eat it, but an old man, Malkaliera, said, "Do not eat it but plant it. I am only a man and will die, but the coconut will be a tree. You will remember it and come back to it after I am dead. You will always remember a tree." (He continues with accounts of his crops there.)

(Why did he leave Awai?) Because I had a garden here too, and I

The People of Alor

157 ^{Then} came the time of the big cough (influenza epidemic of 1918). Mother
158 said that since I could climb trees I should go with her and help her
159 pick mangos. On our way home mother carried the mangoes. She
160 went up first into the house and came right back down. I followed her
up and sat down next to Palsaku's feet. Nobody told me he had died
while we were away; I thought he was just lying there sleeping. I sat
next to the dead man's feet eating a mango, which I hadn't peeled be-
cause I was just biting into it. Father came up and tugged my hand. I asked why
and he said, "Didn't you see? Palsaku is dead and you are sitting at a
dead man's feet." I was afraid and went out with father. I sat on the
verandah but father said, "Don't sit there. Go elsewhere. People are
coming to bury Palsaku." So I got down off the verandah and told
people Palsaku was dead. They all knew it. I told what had happened
to me. Then I went and sat on Fankalima's verandah, and people came
to bury the dead man. When they were burying him, the dead man's
wife, Tilmanu, didn't look at the coffin as she was covering it [to free
her soul from the dead spouse], so she missed it. Fankalima said, "The
woman's husband must want to follow her. She will soon be dead be-
cause she didn't cut the rope."

That night a great many people came to stay with Tilmanu because
her husband had just died. They were all crowded together, sleeping
side by side. Tilmanu suddenly went crazy. She looked around, saw a
arrow, and began jabbing it into each sleeping man. [The interpreter
shivered at this point.] She drove the point into one man and it went
into Kawaiman's chest about half an inch. She also struck Manglu's
forehead and made a long wound. Everybody sat up and shouted; they
thought an enemy had entered the house and was killing them. Then
father and Alarkumani threw torches on the fire. When it was light they
saw that Tilmanu's place was empty, but the door was still shut. They
searched the house and saw Tilmanu crouched under the eaves with
the arrow. Alarkumani spoke nicely to her and coaxed her to come out-
side with him. When she started up the house ladder again, he snatched
the ladder from under her, pulled it up, and shut the door. Then he
called to all the village to shut their doors tightly and to guard them,
that Tilmanu was crazy and was loose outside. So she stayed out all
night. In the morning Alarkumani called all the strong men of the village
to come and tie up Tilmanu. People said, "Let us make sure she is dead
before we bury her." So they divined, and the human midwife sections
fell so that the answer was "dead." They asked if she would be dead
soon or not, and it fell on "soon." While they were divining she went
up into the house. Alarkumani told Manifani and Palsaku to fetch her.

The People of Alor

[59] cultural sentiment, and yet that all these things were full of emotional content for him.] So now too it is the hungry season. If people who have lots of food remember us and give us food, good food, we remember them when food is plentiful and pay them back. [Long pause. Was this last speech a bid for a food gift from me as an expression of love? I definitely played a maternal role for the informant.]

When I was maybe six years old, a man from Kolaki was our guest. He gave us a coconut. I was out in the fields with my father when he was cutting weeds. I took a knife to open the coconut and eat it. My father told me not to do that but to plant it. I wanted to cut weeds, but my father didn't want me to. I cried, but he would not come up to comfort me. So I took the coconut and threw it down the hillside at him. It hit his side. He took a stick and chased me. I ran, but he caught up with me and beat me from my head to my thighs.

When I was ten or twelve years old, Kolaka [an older sister] called me to come and mind her baby. We went together to Lakmeling. I took care of the baby for five days; then Kolaka wanted to go to Atimeling. I was afraid to be left alone and I cried, so she came back and we went up into the house together. Then after a while Kolaka went out. While I wasn't looking she went off to Atimeling. She left me there. I left the child in the house and started out to follow her. I got down as far as the Limbur ravine, and there I met a big man from Lakmeling. He grabbed me by the wrist and said he was going to kill me. I was afraid and ran away. When I got back to Kolaka's house the baby was still sleeping. That evening Kolaka came back. The next morning I went back to the river and saw a large oil trap. There was a dead rat in it. I took it away and saw a great big oil in the trap. Then I carried the oil back to the village still alive. When I got there Pedata's father said, "A child has brought back an oil, so my women had better cook rice." His women cooked rice and we all ate together. [This he told with much pride.] The next day I went again to the trap. There was nothing in it but there was a bird near it. I caught it and went back to the village to play with it. An old man took it from me to eat. [Question.] I wasn't angry, because his wife was my mother's cousin.

After a while I came back to Atimeling with Kolaka and my father. [62] One morning I got up at sunrise and looked at the sun. I saw two, one on the eastern horizon and one overhead. I went in and told my mother and father, and they told me not to speak about it. It was a sign of good luck. [If one told good omens, they would not materialize.]